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THE SCHOLAR'S MISSION

BY

O. A. BROWNSON

BOSTON
BENJAMIN H. GREENE
1843

Mrs. J. M. Brewer.
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Rev. O. A. Brownson,

Dear Sir: At a meeting of the Gamma Sigma Society, held immediately after the public services of yesterday, we were appointed to present you the thanks of the Society, for the very interesting, just and instructive Oration, pronounced before them on this Anniversary; and to request a copy of the same for the press.

Yours, with highest esteem,

Jona. Tenney,
George H. Atkinson,
Wm. A. Mack.

Dartmouth College,
July 27, 1843.

Burlington, August 2, 1843.

To Rev. O. A. Brownson,

Sir: At a meeting of the Alumni and other Friends of the University of Vermont, the undersigned were appointed a Committee to solicit for publication, a copy of the very acceptable Address, which you yesterday pronounced before them.

In conveying to you the request of the meeting, permit us, as individuals, to unite our wishes with theirs, that you may gratify those who listened to the discourse by furnishing a copy for the press.

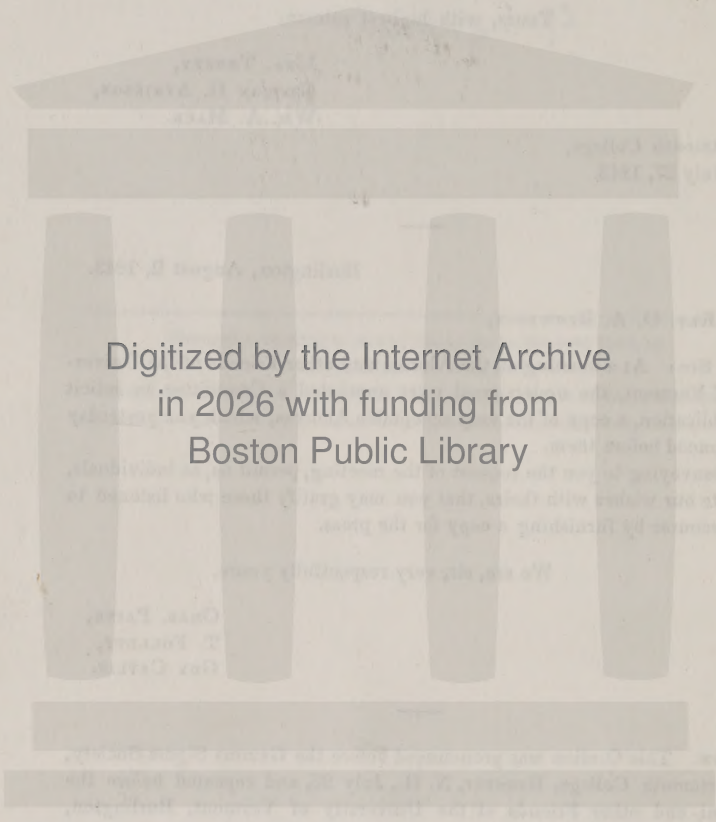
We are, sir, very respectfully yours,

Chas. Paine,
T. Follett,
Guy Catlin.

Note. This Oration was pronounced before the Gamma Sigma Society, of Dartmouth College, Hanover, N. H., July 26, and repeated before the Alumni and other Friends of the University of Vermont, Burlington, August 1, 1843, and is published by request of both societies.

It is published substantially as it was delivered before the first named society.

O. A. B.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THE SCHOLAR'S MISSION.

GENTLEMEN :

You have invited me, and I have very willingly accepted your invitation, to address you on this anniversary occasion, which must be to you one of no ordinary interest. I say, to *you*, for the recollections and associations, which make this a great day to you, a day long to be remembered, and looked back upon as marking an important epoch in your life, form, I regret to say, no part of my experience. I have no recollections or associations connected with college halls or academic bowers ; yet I have learned from the events of life, to rejoice with those who rejoice, and to weep with those who weep ; and I would not willingly admit myself wanting in that patriotism which takes a deep interest in each successive generation of scholars, that our literary institutions annually send forth for the honor and glory, the safety and prosperity, of the country.

Though but ill-qualified by my own scholastic attainments to do the subject justice, I have yet thought

that I could not better comply with your wishes, and answer the request which brings me here, than by selecting for the theme of our reflections, THE SCHOLAR'S MISSION. This is a subject which must be fresh in your minds; which must have often occupied your thoughts, and given rise to both painful anxieties, and joyful anticipations; and to which the attention of us all is naturally drawn, by the day, the place, the occasion, and their respective associations.

In treating this subject, I shall first consider the Scholar's Mission in general; and secondly, as modified by the peculiar tendencies of our own age and country.

I use this word Scholar in no low or contracted sense. I mean by it, indeed, a *learner*, for truth is infinite, and we are finite; but on this occasion I mean by it the MASTER rather than the pupil; and not merely the one who has mastered some of the technicalities of a few of the more familiar sciences, but the one who has, as far as possible, mastered all the subjects of human thought and interest, and planted himself on the beach at the farthest distance as yet moistened by the ever advancing wave of science. I understand by the Scholar no mere pedant, dilettante, literary epicure or dandy; but a serious, hearty, robust, full-grown man; who feels that life is a serious affair, and that he has a serious part to act in its eventful drama; and must therefore do his best to act well his part, so as to leave behind him, in the good he has done, a grateful remembrance of his having been. He may be a theologian, a politician, a naturalist, a poet, a moralist, or

a metaphysician ; but whichever or whatever he is, he is it with all his heart and soul, with high, noble,—in one word, *religious* aims and aspirations.

With this view of the Scholar, though I would not be thought deficient in my respect for Classical Literature, I cannot call one a scholar, merely because he is familiar with Homer and the Greek Tragedians, and can make a felicitous quotation from Horace or Juvenal. The Scholarship is not in this familiarity, nor in this ability, though neither is to be despised ; but in so having studied the Classics as to have made them the means of throwing new and needed light on some dark passage in human history or in the human heart. We study the Classics as Scholars only when we study them as the exponents of Greek and Roman life, of the humanity that then and there was, lived and toiled, joyed and sorrowed, came and went ; and from deep sympathy with that humanity acquire a deeper sympathy with the humanity that now is, and strengthen our hearts and our hands for the necessary work of attaining to a nobler humanity hereafter.

In other words, the Scholar is a grave, earnest-minded man, who lives and labors for some high and worthy end,—a man who will pore over the past, survey the present, search " by sea and land each mute and living thing,"

> " ———— Outwatch the Bear
> With thrice great Hermes, or unsphere
> The spirit of Plato ; ————"

break forth in song, strike such music from the human heart as shall tame savage beasts, and make the very

stones assume shape and order in the walled city; or utter himself in fiery indignant eloquence that shall make senates thrill, nations upheave, tyrants look aghast, and monarchs put their hands to their heads to feel for their crowns; but all and always for some high and solemn purpose, some true and noble end, for which he counts it honorable to live, and sweet to die.

But, what is this end? The answer to this question, answers the question, what is the Scholar's Mission? I have here asked a grave question, one not to be lightly passed over, or answered without long, patient and profound thought. No small number of those who pass among us for scholars even, answer it with thoughts quite too low and unworthy; with no adequate conceptions of its reach or its wealth, as if in fact, the end of the Scholar were merely to create a literature. The youth that go forth from our colleges and universities mourn over the meagreness of our national literature, and glowing with their young fire and patriotic zeal, start up, and with noble resolution exclaim, "Go to now, let us create an American Literature." But, literature is never to be sought for its own sake: the end of the Scholar is not to be a Scholar; but a man, doing that which cannot be done without Scholarship. However desirable it may be to have a rich and varied, a profound and living national literature, it can never be obtained by being sought as an end, and with "malice aforethought." It comes, if it come at all, only on condition that brave and true-hearted men

engage in some great and good work for their country or their race, to the performance of which literature is indispensable; and it will be true and noble, rich and varied, living and profound, just in proportion to the nobleness of the work, and the zeal, purity and ability with which they have labored in its performance. The end is never the production of a work of art, however grand in conception, successful in execution, or exquisite in finish; but the realization of a good to which art is subsidiary. It is to honor his country and her gods, that Phidias chisels his Minerva or his Jupiter. The end is always worship; the artist is the priest ministering at the altar; the art is the victim, the sacrifice.

But once more, what is this end, lying beyond the production of a work of art, or the creation of a national literature, which the Scholar must seek, for which he must live and labor, and not fear but even joy to die? It needs the Scholar to answer; and in point of fact no small part of the Scholar's Mission consists precisely in answering this question; in like manner as the great end of life is to learn to live. The Scholar, I have said, is a grave, earnest-minded man, who feels that he has a serious part to act in the eventful drama of life; what then, can be, in general terms, the end he must seek, but the end common to him and to all others; that is, the true end of man? What then is the true end, in the language of the Catechism, "the chief end of man?" For what has God made and placed us here? How are we to fulfil the end for which we were made and placed in this

world? Here we see at once, are questions which are not to be answered without sounding the very depths of theology, ethics, politics, and metaphysics. How answer the question, what is the end of man, without ascertaining man's nature and the designs of his Maker; that is to say, without theology and metaphysics? How determine the means by which we are to fulfil this end, without ascertaining man's relations to his Maker, and to his fellow-men; and to his fellow-men taken both individually and collectively,—that is to say, without practical divinity, ethics and politics, the special sciences that treat of these relations? The Scholar's first and principal duty then will be found to consist in mastering the sciences which answer the questions, what is our destiny? and what are our means of fulfilling it? For it is only in knowing what is our destiny, and in laboring to accomplish it, that we make any the least progress towards our perfection as human beings.

You will find, my young friends, the answer to the question I have asked, in your religion. Religion has a two-fold office,—to answer the question, what is my destiny; and to be to me the "wisdom of God, and the power of God" to struggle, without fatigue and successfully, for its realization. It is then absolutely indispensable to the Scholar. An irreligious Scholar, in any worthy sense of the term, were a solecism. You might as well speak of the astronomer who has not heard of the stars, the painter who cannot distinguish between light and shade, the musician who perceives not the harmony of sounds, or the mechani-

cian who is ignorant of the lever and the laws of motion. No man can understand the end for which he was made, love it, fix his eye on it, and pursue it with unfaltering step through good report, and through evil, in life and in death, without religion; the disinterested affection it quickens, and the power of self-denial and self-sacrifice it communicates. In our young days, we do not always believe this; we fancy it a mark of superior wisdom and manliness to feel ourselves free from vulgar prejudices and the *pietistic* cant of the saints; and so we merely tolerate religion, or at best condescend to *patronise* it. But as we grow older, and are less affected by mere glare and novelty, as our experience becomes deeper and richer, life's pathos more genuine, and we able to look on men and things with the eyes of a maturer wisdom, we change all this, and come to feel that our young wisdom was but folly, and our youthful strength was but weakness. "When I was a child I thought as a child, I spake as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things." The sooner we put away the folly of believing that it is religion that needs us, and not we that need religion, the sooner shall we cease to be children, and enter upon our career as men.

But still once more, what is this end, the chief end of man? The Catechism answers, and answers truly: "To glorify God and enjoy him forever." It is to grow up into the stature of perfect men in Christ Jesus; or in the language of human philosophy, to struggle for the highest worth admitted by the laws of our nature; or in other words still, to aspire always to

the Highest, to the realization of the bright Ideal of the True, the Beautiful and the Good, that forever hovers over and before us. Man was made for growth. The whole creation is progressive; realizing ever in its continuous growth more and more of the Infinite Ideal of the Creator. Nothing stands still; nothing remains where or what it was. All flows on, like the current of a deep and mighty river, from eternity to eternity. Man's destiny, and man's glory is to flow on with it. It will suffice, then, for our present purpose to say, that the end for which God made us, and placed us here, is PROGRESS, growth, to be eternally approaching the Infinite God, communion with whom is the consummation of the soul's good.

Thus far I have considered the end of the Scholar only so far forth as he is a man, in which sense his mission has nothing peculiar. But in realizing progress, in effecting this end, common alike to him and to all men, the Scholar has a peculiar, a special mission, a high and responsible mission; namely, that of INSTRUCTING AND INSPIRING MANKIND FOR THE ACCOMPLISHMENT OF THEIR DESTINY. The Scholar is always one who stands out from and above the mass, to instruct them as to what is their duty, and to inspire them with zeal and energy to perform it.

We talk much in these days and in this country, about equality, and some of us go so far as to contend that every man is fitted by nature to succeed equally in every thing. We lose individual inequalities in the dead level of the mass, and believe that we shall be

able more effectually to carry the race forward by means of this dead level, than by suffering individuals to stand out from and above the multitude, the prophets of a more advanced stage, and the ministers of God to help us to reach it. But this theory of equality, popular as it may have become, will not abide the wear and tear of active life; it is a mere dream, a silly dream, unsustained by a single fact tangible to waking sense. All men are equal only in this, that all are equally men, equally accountable to God, and no one is bound to obey any merely *human* authority. The authority, to have the right to command, must be more than human. For each man may say, "I also am a man. Who as a simple human being is more? No one? Then has no one, as a simple human being, the right to call himself my master." In this sense, and in this only, is it true, "that all men are created equal."

The universe is made up of infinite diversity. No two objects can be found in nature which are absolutely indistinguishable, or which perform one and the same office. In our own race the same diversity obtains. One man does not merely repeat another. All individual men participate of humanity, of human nature, and are men only by virtue of such participation; but humanity, all and entire, enters into no one man. No one man can say, I am all of humanity; for if it were so, you might kill off all save that one man, and humanity would suffer no loss. But such is not the fact. Each man represents a distinct phasis of humanity, or humanity under a point of view under which it is represented by no other; and in this fact consists his

individuality. As each man performs a distinct office in the manifestation or representation of humanity, humanity must have need of all her sons, the highest and the lowest; and hence it is, that no one can be spared, and whoso wounds but one, the least significant of these sons, wounds the mighty heart of universal humanity herself. Here is the broad and solid foundation of society and the social virtues,—on which society becomes, not a mere assemblage or aggregation of individuals, held together by that rope of sand, enlightened self-interest, but a living organism, with a common centre of life, and a common principle of vitality; a one body with many members, and all the members members one of another.

This being the constitution of humanity and of human society, it follows that in the order of Divine Providence, each man must needs have his special mission, and that a mission which no one else has, or can be fitted to perform. Each is to labor for the advancement of all, not by attempting to do the work of all indiscriminately; but by confining himself to his own specially allotted work. To some is assigned one work, to others another. Some are called to be artists, some to be cultivators of science, others to be industrials. All cannot be prophets and priests; all cannot be kings and rulers, all cannot be poets and philosophers; and all, I dare add, cannot be *scholars*, in all or in any of the special departments of Scholarship. The doctrine of Saint Paul is as applicable in its principle here to society at large, as to the Church. "Now there are diversities of gifts but the same Spirit. For to one is

given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another, the word of knowledge; to another, faith; to another, the gifts of healing; to another, the working of miracles; to another, prophecy; to another, discerning of spirits; to another, divers kinds of tongues; to another, the interpretation of tongues; but all these worketh that one and the self-same Spirit, *dividing to every man severally as he will.* For as the body is one and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many are one body; so also is Christ. For the body is not one member, but many. If the foot shall say, Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? and if the ear shall say, Because I am not the eye, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? IF THE WHOLE BODY WERE AN EYE, WHERE WERE THE HEARING? IF THE WHOLE WERE HEARING, WHERE WERE THE SMELLING? But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him. AND IF THEY WERE ALL ONE MEMBER WHERE WERE THE BODY? But now are they many members, yet but one body. And the eye cannot say to the hand, I have no need of thee. Nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you. Nay much more, those members of the body which seem to be more feeble, are necessary, and those which we think to be less honorable, upon these bestow we more abundant honor." *

This diversity of gifts and callings is essential to the very conception of society; and it is a fact which there is no getting over, if we would. It has its root in the

* 1 Cor. xii. 4—23.

order of Providence, in human nature, and in human society. I care not how much you war against it; you will never fit every man to succeed equally in every thing. I care not how universal you may make education, nor how nearly equal the advantages you may extend to all the children of the land; only a small, a very small number of those you educate will become Scholars. The world has had but one Homer, one Dante, one Shakspeare. In what State has education been more generally or more equally diffused, than in this very State of New Hampshire, boasting a more solid and enduring foundation in the glory and worth of her sons, than in the granite of her hills? And yet of the many you have educated, how few have become distinguished Scholars? I fall here, I own, on an instance more unfavorable to my position, than any other I could select; but even here, I am borne out by unquestionable fact. Yet let us beware how we seize upon this fact to foster foolish aristocratic pride or pretension. No one can say beforehand, who shall be the distinguished. No rank, no wealth, no facilities rank and wealth can command, will assure us a Scholar in our dearly cherished son. All the training in the world may be bestowed in vain. Up from some obscure corner, out from some Nazareth, from some carpenter's shop, blacksmith's forge, or shoe-maker's bench, from some uncheered hut of misery and wretchedness, may start forth the true Scholar; make his way through the crowd that close up against him; over the rich and proud that with armed heel would crush him; baffle poverty and want; and finally stand up in the

serene majesty of the soul, an acknowledged chief and leader of his race;—a nobleman, with the patent of his nobility written, not on parchment, but with God's own hand on his heart.

But the doctrine I wish to establish is, not merely that the human race is carried forward by a division of labor, by each one's having, and confining himself to, his specially allotted work; but, that progress does not require it to be otherwise, and especially that it does not consist, as some in these days would seem to contend, in reducing all to the dead level of which I have spoken, and in effecting such an equality of capacity and attainments as shall make every man alike qualified for every thing. Such a state of equality is as undesirable as it is impossible. Level all your mountains, fill up all your valleys, reduce all the inequalities of the earth's surface to one immense plain, and your immense plain is the immense desert Sahara. With this dead level, society would lose all its variety, all its charms, all its activity; and become as calm and as putrid as the stagnant pool. No, there is and should be in human Society, as in the Church, a diversity of gifts and callings, and each in its place, in reference to its end, is alike necessary, alike honorable, alike noble.

Without this diversity, and the inequality necessarily growing out of it, it were idle to talk of the progress of humanity. The mass are not carried forward without individuals, who rise above the general average. Where would have been the race now, had it not been for such men as Pythagoras, Socrates, and Plato, Abelard and St. Thomas, Bacon and Descartes, Locke

and Leibnitz; Alexander and Cæsar, Alfred and Charlemagne, Napoleon and Washington; Homer, Æschylus, Sophocles, and Pindar, Virgil and Homer, Dante, Shakspeare, and Milton, Goethe and Schiller; not to speak of the immeasurably higher order of providential men, whom we bring not into the category of these,—inspired Prophets and Messengers, specially called, and illuminated in their several degrees, by the Holy Ghost,—such as Noah and Abraham, Moses and David, Paul and John, Augustine and Bernard, George Fox, and others. It is only by the life, love, labors, and sacrifices of these, and such as these, that the race is quickened, instructed, inspired, and enabled to make its way through the ages to the accomplishment of its destiny.

There are, and it is worse than idle to deny it, labors indispensable to the progress of mankind, under its moral, religious, intellectual, and social relations, which can be performed only by men who stand out, and are distinguished by their capacity, virtues and attainments, from the multitude. The most ordinary questions concerning man's destiny, or mere every-day ethics, can be answered only by the light of a metaphysical and theological science, which the many do not, will not, and cannot be made to understand. Popular passions, popular prejudices, popular ignorance, popular errors and vices, are often to be withstood; but who will there be to withstand them, if there be none among us, who rise above the level of the mass? for who, not rising above the level of the mass, but must share them? Who among us, having only the wisdom and

virtue common to all, for the sake of truth, justice, love, religion, country, humanity, will throw themselves before the popular car, and with their bodies seek to arrest its destructive career?

But when I speak of the mass, of the many, I pray you not to misinterpret me. They whom I include in the term *many*, or on whom my mind specially rests in speaking of the many, are not exclusively those whom the world calls the poor and illiterate. Never measure a man's capacity, attainments, or virtues, by his apparent rank, wealth, or education. I am no great believer in the superior capacities, or virtues, of what are called the upper classes. Nine-tenths of the graduates of our colleges, are as innocent as the child unborn of any, the least, the faintest conception of the real problems of metaphysical science; and it were as easy to make him who is stone deaf, relish the performance of one of Beethoven's Symphonies, as to make them even conceive of these problems, to say nothing of their solving them. Only a few peculiarly constituted minds, coming at rare intervals of time and space, can seek successfully their solution; and these perhaps come oftenest, when and whence they are least expected. To these, come when or whence they may, belongs the solution of the problems of which I speak; the results or benefit of the solution belong to the many. So say we of theology, ethics, and politics. The *science* is for the few, the *results* for all men. The science is to be sought by the few alone, but solely and expressly *for* the many, who will not, and cannot successfully seek it for themselves. To

the few then the honor and glory of the labor; to the many the right to enter into the labors of the few, and enjoy the fruit.

The human race is progressive, but progressive only on the condition, that different members fulfil different offices. Among these different offices, is that of instructor and inspirer. This office is to be filled by the Scholar. But you will bear in mind, that it is an office instituted by Providence, not for the special benefit of the incumbent. The Scholar's Mission is to instruct and inspire the race in reference to the general end, —progress,—for which God has made and placed us here. This is the fact—that too many of those who pass for Scholars, overlook: and hence the prejudice we find in our own day and country against them. This prejudice does not grow out of any dislike to the general law of Providence, that the race is to be carried forward by individuals, who stand out from and above the mass. Every Republican glories in the name of Washington; every Democrat delights to honor Jefferson. No man is really offended, that there is inequality in men's capacities, attainments, and virtues. But the prejudice grows out of the fact, that our educated men are exceedingly prone to forget, that their superior capacities and attainments are to be held by them, not for their own private benefit, but as sacred trusts, to be used for the moral, religious, social, and intellectual advancement of mankind. They for the most part look upon their superior capacities and scholastic attainments, as special marks of Divine favor

upon themselves personally, conferred for their own special good, because God perchance loves them better than he does others. This is a grievous error. God is no respecter of persons; and if he gives this man one capacity, and that man another, it is not because he loves one man more or less than he does another; for it is always while the children are yet unborn, before they have done either good or evil, that it is written, "the elder shall serve the younger." But it is because he has so ordered it, that his purposes in regard to humanity, are to be carried on only by a division of labor, by establishing among men a diversity of gifts and callings, by assigning to one man one work, and to another man another work. The mortal sin of every aristocracy, whether literary, scientific, military, or political, is by no means in the inequality it implies, produces, or perpetuates; but in the fact, that it regards itself as a *privileged* order, specially endowed for its own special benefit. Hence, every aristocracy seeks always to consolidate itself, and to secure to itself all the advantages of the state, or of society. It seeks to make itself a caste, and to rule, not as the servant of others, but as their master. But to whom much is given, of him much is required. If more is given to the few than to the many, it is that they may bear the heavier burdens; as says Jesus, "let him that is greatest among you, be your servant." Greatness is conferred not to be ministered unto, but to minister. He is the greatest, who best serves his race; and *he* proves himself not great, but little, who seeks to serve not his race, but himself.

The notion, then, which Scholars sometimes entertain, that their Scholarship is a personal immunity, a sort of personal luxury, which they have the right to indulge for themselves alone, and that this is wherefore in God's providence they have been blessed with the capacity and means to be Scholars, is false, mischievous; and whoso entertains it, and acts on it, will assuredly fail in discharging his mission as a Scholar. Just in proportion as you rise above the level of the mass, does your obligation to labor for their welfare enlarge and strengthen; and your true distinction, your true glory, is not that in ability or attainment you rise above them, but that you more successfully, and under more important relations, contribute to their real growth, than do any of your competitors. The Scholarship that rests with the Scholar, that seeks only the Scholar's own ease, pleasure, convenience, or renown, is worthy only of the unmitigated contempt of all men. Of all men, the Scholar is he who needs most thoroughly to understand and practice the abnegation of self; who more than any other is to be laborious and self-sacrificing, feeling himself charged to work out a higher good for his brethren; and that wherever he is, or whatever he does, the Infinite Eye rests upon him, and his honor as a man, as well as a Scholar, is staked on the wisdom and fidelity, with which he labors to execute his mission.

Thus far I have considered the Mission of the Scholar only in its general character, as we find it at all times, and in all places; but it is time that we proceed

now to consider it as modified by the peculiar tendencies of our own age and country. The Scholar, let him do his best, will be more or less affected by the peculiar tendencies of the age in which he lives, and the country in which he is brought up, and must act; and in these peculiar tendencies he finds, and must find, his special mission, the special work to which God in his providence calls him. His general Mission, we have said, is to instruct and inspire his race. To ascertain his special Mission, he must ask, In relation to what does my age or my country most need to be instructed and inspired? Is it the Mission of the Scholar to vindicate the Classics, when and where the Classics are in no danger of being underrated? to fight against knight-errantry, after knight-errantry has become extinct, never to be revived? to war against monarchy, where all the tendencies are to democracy? or to seek to enlarge the power of the masses, when and where their power is already so great as to overwhelm and crush all who dare to resist it, or in the most modest terms to question its legitimacy? No; it never is, it never can be, the Mission of the Scholar to do over again for the progress of his race, what has already been done; but that which has not as yet been done, and which must be done, before another step forward can be taken. What is the special work for me to do *here* and *now*? This is *here* and *now* my work as a Scholar.

The Scholar, I repeat, is one who stands out from and above the mass, as it were, a prophet and a priest to instruct and inspire them. He is not, then, and can-

not be, one who joins in with the multitude, and suffers himself to be borne blindly and passively along by their pressure. Do not mistake me. The Scholar is not one who stands above the people, and looks down on the people with contempt. He has no contempt for the people; but a deep and an all-enduring love for them, which commands him to live and labor, and, if need be, suffer and die, for their redemption; but he never forgets that he is their instructor, their guide, their chief, not their echo, their slave, their tool. He believes, and proceeds on the belief, that there is a standard of truth and justice, of wisdom and virtue, above popular convictions, ay, or popular instincts; and that to this standard both he and the people are bound to conform. To this standard he aims to bring his own convictions, and by it to rectify his own judgments; and having so done, instead of going with the multitude when they depart from it, swimming with the popular current when it sets in against it, he throws himself before the multitude, and with a bold face and a firm voice commands them to pause, for their onward course is their death. He resists the popular current, he braves popular opinion, wherever he believes it wrong or mischievous, be the consequences to himself what they may. This he must do, for Providence, in giving him the capacity and means to be a Scholar, that is, a leader and chief of his race, has made him responsible, to the full measure of his ability, for the wisdom and virtue of the multitude.

Here is the law that must govern the Scholar. He must labor to lead public opinion where right, and

correct it where wrong. Keeping this in view, we can without difficulty comprehend what, in these days and in this country, is the special work for the Scholar. The tendency of our age and country is a *levelling* tendency. This is seen everywhere and in everything; in literature, religion, morals, and philosophy, — in Church and in State. There is no mistaking this fact. In *literature* the tendency is to bring all down to the level of the *common* intelligence, to adapt all to the lowest round of intellect. What is profound we eschew; what requires time and patient thought to comprehend, we forego. For why should we publish what the mass do not readily understand? Nay, what can be the value of that, which transcends the capacity, or attainments, of the many? A profound and original work on philosophy, if written, could hardly be published among us, save at the author's own expense; for it would net no profit to the bookseller. Works sell in proportion to their want of depth. Take a work, which appeals to the five hundred best minds in the country, subtract one half of its pure gold, beat out the remaining half so as to cover the same extent of surface, and you will square the number of its readers; and thus on, just in proportion as you diminish the depth and extend the surface, till a miserable tale, like *Rosina Meadows*, shall be puffed in all your Newspapers, and attain in a few weeks to a circulation of from ten to twenty thousand copies; while the admirable Philosophical Miscellanies of Cousin, Jouffroy, and Constant, translated by Mr. Ripley, with equal taste, elegance, freedom and fidelity, shall attain

to a circulation of only some five or six hundred copies in four or five years.

In *Religion* and the *Church*, we find the same tendency to level all distinctions. The Minister of God, who was clothed with authority to teach, has become the Minister of the *congregation*, and responsible to those, whose sins he is to rebuke, for the doctrines he holds, and the reproofs he administers; and instead of being at liberty to consult only the glory of his Master in the salvation of sinners, he must study to render himself popular, so as to please men as well as God. In the sanctuary, as well as on the hustings, we hear, *vox populi est vox Dei.* The pulpit is thus forced, instead of proclaiming, with an authoritative voice, the word of God, our Supreme Law, to echo popular convictions and prejudices, popular passions and errors, and to vary its tone with the varying moods of the congregation. It loses its power to maintain the form of sound words, and is driven to study to be attractive, *entertaining*, so as to rival the assembly, or the theatre. The elaborate sermons which pleased our ancestors, have become like the armor of the old knights of the Middle Ages, which we preserve, and furbish up now and then, wondering all the while whence the gigantic race, that were able to wear it. One of those old sermons, to be found now and then in an antiquarian bookstore, or on the shelves of some old-world Scholar's library, contains divinity enough to serve a modern clergyman a whole life-time for Sundays, and week-day and evening lectures to boot.

The religious *press* feels the same influence; echoes the popular sentiment; and is as superficial as the popular mind. Scarcely a question is solidly and learnedly discussed; very few of our theologians are up with the literature of their profession; fewer still are able to make any contributions to theological science. We every day value less and less sound theological knowledge. Our congregations cry out against *doctrinal* sermons; religious readers will hear nothing of controversial theology; and the conviction has become quite general, that it matters much less what one thinks, than what one feels; what are one's doctrines, than what are one's emotions. Hence the efforts of our religious teachers, whether from the pulpit or the press, are directed chiefly, not to instructing us in regard to the great doctrines, which grow out of the moral facts of the Gospel, and the great and awful mysteries of salvation through a crucified Redeemer; but to producing, by various and complicated machinery, by a sort of spiritual mesmeric passes and manipulations, certain emotions, or momentary states of feeling, mistaken for piety, which come and go, and leave the sinner not less a child of hell than before.

Nor is this all. While our religious teachers are busy with their spiritual mesmerism, contenting themselves with hurling now and then a feeble missile, like Priam's arrow, against popery; relating puerile anecdotes against infidels; and sending forth ephemeral tracts on the mere tithe-cummin-and-mint of the law; there is a shallow, but reckless spirit, abroad, rashly at work with whatever is sacred, affirming and

denying all with equal levity and equal reason. In the Church itself, as it exists with us, all seems loosed from its old moorings, and is afloat, and floating—no one can say whither. All opinions are broached, asserted, denied, from the well-defined Catholicism of Anselm and Hildebrand, down to the feeble echo of Strauss, in the "Discourse on Matters pertaining to Religion," in which Naturalism and No-churchism are baptised, and it is virtually maintained, that it is a matter of no moment to the truth of Christianity, whether there was or was not such a person as Jesus Christ. We are in the midst of complete religious anarchy. No education that is not religious, is worth having; and yet our legislatures are forced to exclude religion from our common schools, so as not to let in sectarianism. We are agreed in nothing. Some of us contend earnestly for the Church, and yet contend that men can be saved without, as well as within its pale; others assert, that it is a Divine Institution, founded by the Lord himself, purchased with his own blood; and yet are not a little afraid, that if it should have power, it would be tyrannical and oppressive; just as if God could tyrannize, or as if any thing Divine could be otherwise than on the side of Right and Freedom! And what can we do to rectify these false notions, and to bring back Christendom to the Unity of the Faith, and to union with the one Body of Christ? How do we meet this shallow and reckless, this irreverent and anarchical, spirit that is abroad?

In the midst of all this confusion and anarchy, a large class among us, who would be thought friendly

to religion, stand in our way, and do all they can to prevent any thorough discussion of great and fundamental principles. They dislike controversy; persuading themselves that they are promoting peace, they block up our path, so that we cannot "follow after the things which make for peace;" under plea of religious liberty and toleration, they promote religious indifference, and bring about religious death. Among these we may reckon no small number of our statesmen and politicians, who applaud themselves, that they take no interest in religious discussions, and are able to look down upon the contests of Churchmen, from their serene heights of indifference, as upon the contests of a family of ants, thrown into confusion by the recent overturn of their hillock. Thus while overrun with churches and consecrated ministers of religion, we are virtually an atheistical people, struck with the curse either of fanaticism or indifference, and dying of spiritual inanition.

Whence the cause of all this? It is not difficult to discover. Our politicians want votes, and the votes of the various religious communions; and must therefore attach themselves strongly to none, and studiously avoid whatever might be offensive to any. Our authors want heterodox as well as orthodox, orthodox as well as heterodox, readers; and must therefore strike out whatever might be offensive to one or the other, and publish only the residuum. All comes from this tendency to defer to the mass, to make all depend on the favor of the multitude; or, as we say in this country, *public opinion*, the virtue and intelligence, the honesty and good sense, of the people!

In *morals* we may trace the same tendency. But its most striking, as well as most dangerous, manifestations are to be seen in the *political* world. In politics the people are sovereign, nay, *sovereigns;* that is to say, each member of the community, is not merely an integral part of the collective sovereignty of the whole, participating in the sovereignty only so far as he is a member of the social organism, called the state; but a sovereign in himself, in his own right and person, as a simple individual man. The will of the people is that to which our loyalty is morally due, and this not the will of the people legally assembled in convention, and solemnly expressed through the constitution, and laws made in conformity thereto; but the informal will of individuals, collected, if collected at all, no matter how; in a word, the will of the *caucus*, which some are beginning to regard as paramount to the *convention.* Hence the chief merit of a public officer is said to be, to find out and conform to the will of his constituents, without inquiring whether that will is constitutional, just, or not; of a politician, to float on the surface of his party, and to obey any direction the political passions for the time may give him. The land, therefore, swarms with miserable demagogues, whose sole worth consists in the energy and distinctness, with which they are able to vociferate, "I am the servant of the people; I bow to the will of the people; I have no will but the will of the people." O the people, the dear, *dear* people, how I love them! How wise and virtuous they are! Their voice is the voice of God!"

The conviction, or feeling, seems to have become quite general, that a public man should have no mind of his own, no will, no conscience, but that of his party. To disregard the wishes of one's party, when that party is assumed to be in the majority, though in obedience to the constitution, to one's oath of office, and conscientious convictions of duty, is proclaimed to be base, unpardonable treachery. But this is not the worst. We not only undermine all public virtue, not only convert the statesman into a mere automaton, a sort of people's smoke-jack; but we sweep away all constitutional checks and restraints on popular caprice, popular passion, and popular error,—leaving all the officers of the state, all the interests of the commonwealth, a prey to the undulations of the irresponsible will of the majority for the time, itself swayed to and fro by miserable demagogues, shallow-pated politicians,—or politicians, as old John Randolph wittily and felicitously described them, of "seven principles; that is, *five loaves* and *two fishes*." Alas, the tendency this way, throughout all Christendom is strong and decided. We have broken down the old nobilities, and hierarchies; we have abolished all that was formerly held to be noble and venerable, and made the scholar the moralist, the politician, and last but not least, the minister of religion, responsible to THE PEOPLE; that is, to public opinion. Whether we write, preach, moralize, or *politize*, we do it with the fear of the people before our eyes, and with the desire to obtain their approbation. In a word, it has come to this, our study is to *follow*, to *echo* the public opinion, not to *form* it.

Now, I do not say, that this tendency is accompanied by no good, nor that it has originated in a source wholly evil. So far as it has been effectual in elevating the great mass of the people, in actually ameliorating, in any degree, their moral, intellectual, or social condition, I certainly am not the man to declaim against it, but to thank my God for it. Whatever tends, directly or indirectly, to benefit the masses, so long neglected and down-trodden, however hard it may bear on individuals, I am prepared in both religion and morals to defend. But I deny, that this tendency has resulted in any general elevation of the poorer and more numerous classes, of those who hitherto in the world's history, have been "the hewers of wood and drawers of water" to the few. On the contrary, I contend that it has been for the most part exceedingly hostile to them, and tended to put far off the day of their complete emancipation. It is in their name, and in their interests, and not in the name or the interests of the aristocracy, with whom I have no sympathy, that I condemn it. I accept, with all my heart, democracy; but democracy, as I understand and accept it, requires me to sacrifice myself *for* the masses, not *to* them. Who knows not, that if you would save the people, you must often oppose them? No advance has ever yet been made, but it has been opposed by them, especially by those they follow as their trusted leaders. Every true prophet and priest, is at first martyred by them. They were the people, who condemned Socrates to drink hemlock; they were the people, who cried out against one

infinitely greater than Socrates, "Crucify, crucify him." The real benefactor of his race, is always calumniated as a public enemy. Nor does it help the matter by saying, this is not the fault of the people themselves, but of those who have their confidence; for if the people were themselves as discerning, and as virtuous, as is contended, how should they come to confide in leaders, who would induce them to crucify their redeemers? The future is elaborated in the present; but its elaborators must work in dark laboratories, in silent retreats, wander the earth in sheep-skins, or in goat-skins, and dwell in the mountains, or in the caves, of whom the world is not worthy. It cannot be otherwise. They are of the future, and must look to the future for their reward. Their views, hopes, wishes, are dark mysteries to their contemporaries, and how can they be the favorites of their age, the men one meets at the head of processions, or in the chief seats in the synagogues. They are the prophets of a better age, of which they must be the builders, as well as the heralds.

You see then, my young friends, if ye will be Scholars, and acquit you like men, what here and now, is your mission. You are *to withstand this levelling tendency*, so far, but only so far, as it is a tendency to level downwards, and not upwards. Do not, however, mistake, on this point, the real purport of your mission. Withstand no tendency to sweep away barbarous castes and factitious distinctions, which divide and make enemies of those, who else were friends and

brothers; advocate no artificial inequality; contend for no privileged orders; but do all in your power to enable all men to stand up, side by side, with their feet on the same level. Consent never that a man, short by nature, shall plant his feet on your, or another man's, shoulders, draw himself up and with great self-complacency, look round on the multitude, and exclaim, "See, how tall I am!" But, if when all men thus stand up, acknowledged to be men, with their feet on the same broad level of humanity, some are taller than you by the head and shoulders, envy them not; but thank God that your race is blessed with men taller than you. Nay, more than this. Though never suffer another man to stand out from, and above, the mass for his own private advantage, though never suffer another man to stand on your, or a brother's, shoulders, as a personal privilege, yet never, when it is necessary in order to scale the walls of ignorance, and error, vice, or tyranny, for the welfare of your country, or your race, withhold your shoulders from whomsoever may need them as the stepping-stones, by which to rise to the height, needed to perform the service proposed. There was nothing incompatible with their dignity as men, or as *free* men, in those old Franks, who raised one of their number on their shields, and said to him, "Be our Chief."

But the tendency I ask you to withstand, is not merely a tendency to sweep away privileged orders, to bring down all who are elevated only for their *private* advantage, and to place all men with their feet on the

same level; but it is a tendency to level from the other extremity, to obtain equality by lopping off all heads, that rise above the general average, and to resist the elevation of any to a sufficient height, to enable them to labor with advantage for the elevation of others. It is this levelling tendency, I ask you to withstand. But this tendency is so strong and decided, that you will find it no easy matter, no child's play, to withstand it. The public mind is unsound, the public conscience is perverted, and in order to set either right, you must appeal from the dominant sentiment of your age and country, to that Higher Tribunal, to which you and the public are both alike accountable. But this requires a degree of moral heroism, which it is as rare as refreshing to find. You are in danger of being yourselves carried away by this very tendency, which I am calling upon you to withstand. Your road to public honor lies through its encouragement, and worldly renown is to be gained, not by resisting, but by obeying it. I insist on this point, for I know the temptations of the Scholar to court popular applause; and I know too how easy it is to win, ay, or to lose, popular applause. He who cannot, as it were, by the mere waving of his hand, compel, if he will, the crowd, as he passes by, to throw up their caps and hurrah, or to hoot and execrate him, has no reason to be proud of his ability, or his attainments, as a Scholar. Do not yield to the temptation. Look always to a higher and a nobler plaudit, than that of the multitude, and for a more terrible execration

than its. Seek the plaudits of the Saints and Martyrs around the throne of God, and fear only the terrible execration of Him, who is judge both of the quick and the dead.

Our old scholars, like Dr. Johnson, in the last century, congratulated themselves, that they had got clear of the noble, and the wealthy, patron, and had come to throw themselves on the public at large. Schiller makes it his boast, that he has had, and will have, no patron, but the public. With how much reason these scholars congratulated themselves on their new relations, may perhaps be determined by comparing the literature of the Middle Ages, or the literature of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, with that of the eighteenth and nineteenth. There is here all the distance between a thesis by Abelard or Saint Thomas, and an article in the penny Magazine, between the Divina Commedia, Hamlet, or Macbeth, and a modern lyrical ballad by Wordsworth or Tennyson. There was no doubt something humiliating to the soul of the true Scholar, in the patronage on which he depended after the suppression of the convents and monasteries, the nurseries and support of learning in the palmy days of the Church,—something not a little derogatory to the freedom and dignity of Letters; but nothing to be compared to the meaner servility we must cultivate, in order to gain the good graces of that nondescript patron, THE PUBLIC. A few well-turned phrases might sometimes conciliate your noble and wealthy patron, and leave you free to speak out, in strong and

manly tones, your honest convictions, or the deep and thrilling experience of your life; but when it comes to the *public*, you can only ask, how much truth is the public prepared to take in? How much of what is deepest, truest, holiest in my experience, will the public heed, or appreciate? How much will the public buy? ay, and pay for, in SOLID CASH? Here is the secret of the thin, watery, vapory character of modern English and American literature. I must write for the public at large, and the public at large has no ability to sit in judgment on what is really rich, profound, and original in science or philosophy.

Here is your work. Here is the evil you are to withstand, and to remedy. But do not deceive yourselves. You cannot remedy this evil by going back to any prior state of society, to any hitherto existing arrangement, how much soever you may regret, that the past has gone, and left us nothing better, nothing so good. There is no going back. Yesterday never returns. You must accept what is, and make it the stepping-stone to something better. Nor can you remedy the evil, by setting yourselves at work "with malice aforethought," to create a richer and profounder national literature; but, by taking high and noble views of the Scholar's mission, of the Scholar's duty, and responsibility, by ascertaining your own special work in the general progress of your kind, and then to go forth and do it; and to do it, if with the public approbation, well and good; if without the public approbation, just as well and good. He to whom

solitude, poverty, social martyrdom, death on the scaffold, or the cross, has anything appalling, has no right to ask to be enrolled as a free citizen in the Republic of Letters. Bind on, if need be, your tunic of coarse serge, and feed on water in which pulse has been boiled, as did Saint Bernard de Clairvaux, or sew you up a suit, "one perennial suit," of leather, as did the sturdy old George Fox, and putting your trust in God, thus defy the world, trample Satan and his temptations under your feet, and maintain, in all their plenitude, the freedom and dignity of Scholarship. Ask not what your age wants, but what it needs; not what it will reward, but what, without which, it cannot be saved; and that go and do; do it well; do it thoroughly; and find your reward in the consciousness of having done your duty, and above all in the reflection, that you have been accounted worthy to suffer somewhat for mankind.

The evil is not in our devotion to the welfare of the mass; nor, indeed, in the fact, that we believe power may be diffused even yet wider through the mass with advantage to the commonwealth; but in the tameness, servility, time-serving and cowardly spirit, of the great body of those, whose education, position, and means, should make them deep thinkers, enlightened guides, heroic defenders of truth, justice, freedom, humanity, and against mobs, no less than against kings, hierarchies, and nobilities. The remedy must be sought in the increase of the number of genuine scholars, in raising up an army of thoroughly

educated men, gifted with a brave, heroic, self-denying spirit, with no will but that of their Divine Master, and knowing only to obey, to the spirit, and to the letter, even the least and the greatest of his commands, let obedience cost what it may.

But I am extending my remarks to an unreasonable length, and trespassing quite too far on your patience and good nature. I can only say in conclusion: Young men! God in his providence, has given you your birth and education, in a great and growing Republic; in a land, won and defended by the hardy virtues of a noble and self-denying ancestry, committed to your charge, to be made the land of true freedom, religious, political, and moral. It is yours to make this the first of lands, in freedom, in virtue, in true and manly principle; the first of lands, in literature and science, religion and philosophy, art and industry. It is yours to instruct and inspire your countrymen, in the great work of achieving true and enduring national glory and prosperity. It is for this, that you have had advantages of education, means of enlarging and cultivating your minds, which have been denied to many of your brethren. Be faithful, I entreat you in the name of God and of Humanity, be faithful to your mission; acquit you like men. Feel that you are under a vow, consecrated from your cradles to be prophets and priests of your race.

Remember, young men, that it is not for your own advantage, your own pleasure, that you are educated,

and are to live. Beware how you imbibe this false notion. Your profession as scholars, has fallen into disrepute, and colleges and universities are regarded among us with no friendly eye ; for it has been felt, that young men are educated, not that they may the better serve the people, but the more easily, and in a more respectable way, get their living out of the people. Redeem the sacred character of the Scholar, I beseech you, from this reproach, by devoting yourselves, heart and soul, to the progress of your race, to the moral, intellectual, and social elevation of all men, especially of the poorer and more numerous classes. In so doing you will magnify your profession as scholars, fulfil your mission, do honor to your country, and receive the approbation of your God.

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